



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard Thursday, 2 November 2006

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

General Peter Cosgrove, Autobiography

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.36 am): I will have the honour later day of officiating at the Queensland launch of General Peter Cosgrove's autobiography. The autobiography, titled *My Story*, is a fascinating account of Peter's rise from a young soldier to Chief of Army and later of the entire Australian Defence Force.

Whether as a young soldier in Vietnam where he was awarded the Military Cross or as one of the first army officers into Darwin after Cyclone Tracy, Peter has always done his duty with courage and professionalism. I would like to read one brief excerpt from the book, because I think it sums him up pretty well. It is Friday, 17 September 1999 and the then Major-General Cosgrove has just been named head of the international force to take on the daunting challenge of bringing peace, order and hope to East Timor. On his first day in the job, he was thrust into the media spotlight and finds himself being interviewed by Kerry O'Brien on the ABC's *7.30 Report*. I quote from page 177 of *My Story*—

The operation would have its risks and the Australian people knew it. At the end of the interview, Kerry O'Brien asked a question along the lines of, 'Tonight there are a very large number of mums and dads (of defence personnel) out there watching. Is there any final thing you want to say to them?'

While I hadn't anticipated that exact question, I had it in the back of my mind that there was one thought I would like to express to underscore my approach to the mission. So I looked as squarely as I could at the camera and said 'I'll take care of them'.

That is Peter Cosgrove. Of course, Queenslanders have been lucky enough to experience that compassion firsthand. Back in March after Cyclone Larry hit far-north Queensland and flattened an area half the size of Tasmania, I picked up the phone and rang General Cosgrove and asked him to come up and help us, and he did. I appointed him head of the Cyclone Larry recovery task force. As all members know, particularly the local member, Warren Pitt, and the Minister for Emergency Services, Pat Purcell, General Cosgrove has done a magnificent job. Anyone who saw the General in action in far-north Queensland will tell you that he was a tower of strength. His firm but friendly hand at countless public and private meetings helped us get things done and helped get people focused. As many people in Innisfail will tell you, just the sight of the General strolling down the street was reassuring in itself.

All Queenslanders owe Peter Cosgrove a huge vote of thanks. His tireless dedication and professionalism in helping rebuild communities in cyclone-affected areas in far-north Queensland will not be forgotten. I take this opportunity to thank General Cosgrove publicly for what he has done.